

BATTERY CHANGING DEVICE FOR AN INDUSTRIAL TRUCK

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application corresponds to German Application No. 102 46 221.6 filed October 4, 2002, which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] This invention relates to a handling device for a battery block of an industrial truck having a lateral opening for the extraction of the battery. The handling device comprises a pallet truck and a battery receptacle that can be placed on the pallet truck.

2. Technical Considerations

[0003] A handling device for battery blocks of fork lift trucks is disclosed, for example, in DE 199 52 042 A1. In this case, a battery receptacle provided with a roller conveyor is used. After the lift truck has been positioned so that the battery receptacle is directly next to the fork lift truck, the battery block can be pushed from a roller conveyor that is permanently mounted on the fork lift truck onto the roller conveyor of the battery receptacle.

[0004] This handling device is very complex and expensive to manufacture, particularly because the battery compartment of each individual industrial truck must be equipped with a roller conveyor.

[0005] Therefore, it is an object of the invention to provide a handling device of the general type described above but which has a simpler construction.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The invention teaches a battery receptacle configured so that the battery receptacle (mounted on a pallet truck) can be inserted underneath the battery block of an industrial truck, whereupon the battery block can be lifted and moved out of the industrial truck. The pallet truck can be a manually operated pallet truck or an electrically operated pallet truck. The battery compartment of the industrial truck, such as a fork-lift truck or a reach truck, is at least partly open on the bottom. The pallet truck with the battery receptacle of the invention can be inserted underneath the battery block located in the industrial truck. When the battery receptacle is then raised by means of the pallet truck, the battery receptacle comes into contact with the battery block and lifts it. The battery block on the battery

receptacle can then be removed from the industrial truck by means of the pallet truck and transported to its destination. A new battery block can be inserted into the industrial truck in the reverse sequence. The system taught by the invention makes it possible to eliminate the previously used roller conveyors altogether. In particular, it is no longer necessary to provide any roller conveyors or other movement devices for the battery block in the industrial truck.

[0007] In one constructive realization, the battery receptacle can have a load-bearing frame with which the weight of the battery block can be supported on a fork of the pallet truck. The fork of the pallet truck can have two spaced, e.g., parallel tines. The frame, which forms the load-bearing structure of the battery receptacle, sits directly on the tines of the fork of the pallet truck in this embodiment.

[0008] A particularly stable structure can be achieved if the load-bearing frame of the battery receptacle is constructed using rectangular hollow sections, e.g., metal sections. The hollow sections can be connected to one another by any conventional means, such as welding, for example, and can be characterized by their relatively high rigidity. The rectangular shape of the sections provides a flat contact surface of the frame on the forks of the pallet truck, and a flat contact surface of the battery block on the frame.

[0009] Fastened to the frame of the battery receptacle can be at least one guide element, with which the battery receptacle (holder) can be fixed in position in the lateral direction relative to the fork of the pallet truck. The guide elements thereby prevent slippage of the battery receptacle on the pallet truck.

[0010] Also fastened to the frame of the battery receptacle can be at least one support element, with which the battery receptacle can be set down on the floor or ground by lowering the fork of the pallet truck. The support element(s) make it possible to set the battery block down on the floor together with the battery receptacle. This capability can also be used to prevent undesired movements of the pallet truck when it is carrying the battery block, i.e., to prevent it from rolling away if it is parked on a slope.

[0011] The number of individual components can be reduced if the guide element and the support element are formed by a single component.

[0012] The battery receptacle can have an adjustable stop for the battery block. The stop determines the depth to which the pallet truck can be inserted underneath the fork lift truck. If the stop, which can have an oblong shape, is oriented perpendicular to the forks of the pallet truck, the stop also makes it easier to hold the battery block in a properly aligned position. If the stop is adjustable, the same battery receptacle can be used for different types of industrial trucks and battery blocks.

[0013] In one advantageous development, the handling device comprises a battery tray on which the battery block can be placed by means of the battery receptacle that is located on the pallet truck. The battery block can be placed on the battery tray without the battery receptacle, e.g., to charge the battery block.

[0014] In an additional advantageous configuration, the battery tray comprises a longitudinal beam which, while the battery block is being set down, can be between the tines of the fork of the pallet truck and optionally between two support elements of the battery receptacle. The battery block can thus be set down essentially in the center on the longitudinal beam.

[0015] To securely prevent the battery block from tipping over laterally, the battery tray can have a crossbeam which, when the battery block is being set down, is located in front of the fork of the pallet truck and underneath the battery block.

[0016] It is particularly advantageous if the longitudinal beam and/or the crossbeam are made of wood. The fact that the beams are made of a non-slip material, e.g., wood, which is resistant to battery acid, makes them particularly simple to construct.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0017] Additional advantages and features of the invention are explained in greater detail below with reference to the exemplary embodiment illustrated in the accompanying schematic figures in which like reference symbols identify like parts throughout:

[0018] Fig. 1 shows a handling device of the invention;

[0019] Fig. 2 shows a pallet truck with an attached battery receptacle in accordance with the invention; and

[0020] Fig. 3 shows a battery block on a battery tray in accordance with the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0021] Fig. 1 shows a handling device of the invention for a battery block 1. The battery block 1 can be removed in the lateral direction from the chassis 2 of an industrial truck which, in this exemplary embodiment, is in the form of a fork lift truck. The handling device comprises a pallet truck 3 having at least one fork. A battery receptacle 4 can be placed on the fork(s). In the illustrated position, the battery block 1 has been raised together with the battery receptacle 4 by means of the pallet truck 3 so that the battery block 1 can be moved relative to the chassis 2.

[0022] Fig. 2 shows an exemplary embodiment of the pallet truck 3 with the battery receptacle 4 on it. The figure shows that the load-bearing frame of the battery receptacle 4 can be made of hollow rectangular tubes or sections 5. On the underside of each of the rectangular sections 5 that run parallel to the tines of the pallet truck 3 there can be a downwardly-directed component 6 which simultaneously acts as a guide element by means of which the battery receptacle 4 can be fixed in the lateral direction on the pallet truck 3, and as a support element by means of which the battery receptacle 4 can be set down on the floor by lowering the fork of the pallet truck 3. At the rear of the battery receptacle 4 there is a stop 7 which defines the depth to which the pallet truck 3 and, thus, the battery receptacle 4, can be inserted underneath an industrial truck. On account of its rectangular shape, the stop 7 can also be used to align the battery block 1 on the battery receptacle 4.

[0023] Fig. 3 shows, from diagonally underneath, a battery tray 8, a battery block 1 that has been placed on it, and a battery receptacle 4. The battery tray 8 comprises a longitudinal beam 9 and a crossbar 10. Starting from the illustrated position of the battery block 1, as the battery receptacle 4 is lowered and removed in the lengthwise direction of the longitudinal beam 9, the battery block 1 sits on the battery tray 8 in a stable position. Any lateral tipping of the battery block 1 is securely prevented by the crossbar 10. A battery tray 8 of this type can be provided, for example, in a charging station for battery blocks 1. In a charging station of this type, a plurality of battery trays 8 can be provided next to one another, for example. In that event, it is particularly advantageous if a plurality of parallel longitudinal beams 9 are fastened to a longer crossbeam 10.

[0024] It will be readily appreciated by those skilled in the art that modifications may be made to the invention without departing from the concepts disclosed in the foregoing description. Accordingly, the particular embodiments described in detail herein are illustrative only and are not limiting to the scope of the invention, which is to be given the full breadth of the appended claims and any and all equivalents thereof.